

WAIARIKI MAORI LAND DISTRICT.

This district extends along the Bay of Plenty from Tauranga to Cape Runaway, and includes the counties of Rotorua, Whakatane, Opotiki, the northern half of Taupo, and the eastern portions of the Tauranga and Matamata counties. Farming operations are located in the main on the alluvial coastal lands between Tauranga and Cape Runaway and on the high pumice tablelands in the Rotorua and Taupo hot-lakes district. In the Opotiki to Cape Runaway area the lands belong almost entirely to the Maoris and there is practically no European settlement. The co-operative dairy factory serving this area at Te Kaha is owned and controlled by Natives and is operating successfully. The area of tillable land is limited, but each bay has its Native settlement. The lands are being gradually cleared and brought into profitable occupation, and with the completion of the coastal highway now under construction the district will be a most attractive one for the motorist and tourist.

Similarly, in the Rotorua vicinity the bulk of the land is Native owned, and the Native-land settlement operations are playing an important part in converting what was, a few years ago, purely a tourist centre into a highly productive farming district. Here the pumice lands are easily worked and are proving responsive to treatment. With judicious stocking and manuring, the pastures are improving, and despite certain soil deficiencies and the resultant "bush" sickness that is evident in some localities, the establishment on the land is progressing satisfactorily, and successful settlement, with Native holdings predominating, seems to be assured.

The Aluwhenua Cup, presented by Viscount Bledisloe for competition among Maori farmers under the various development schemes, was this year regained by the Waiariki District. First place (equal) was awarded to two settlers in the Bay of Plenty area (Jack Black and Whareparaoa Rewharewha), while the next position went to Johnnie Edwards, of Horohoro (Waikaukau section). The judge of the competition spoke very highly of the competitors' farms, and of the ability and initiative displayed.

Rains in February this year caused heavy losses in the cream-supplies through bridges being washed away and torrential streams or rivers cutting off access to the dairy factories. This was the case at Orete and Whangaparaoa, and to a lesser degree at Ruatoki, where settlers have to ford the rivers to reach their factory. Flood damage in the Rotorua area was confined to slips and wash-outs on by-roads, but no stock losses were recorded.

During the year extensive development was commenced in the Tauranga district to give employment to unemployed Natives and to clean up what was a weed-infested area. To relieve the unemployment position in Auckland City and North Auckland, some ninety unemployed Maoris were found regular employment in this district in bushfelling, fern-clearing, and post-splitting.

Two abandoned sheep and cattle stations in the Bay of Plenty district which were previously leased to Europeans were brought under the developmental policy during the year. The work here will be confined to maintaining and improving areas that have been grassed but which are showing signs of deterioration.

Arrangements are now being finalized for the granting of tenures to those settlers on the Horohoro and Tikitere sections who are considered to be successfully established and self-supporting.

Favourable increases are shown in the various activities of the schemes, the cash receipts for the year, as well as stock on hand at the end of the year, showing a considerable upward trend over last year's figures. This year 942 bales of wool were shorn, which was an increase of 104,700 lb. on last year's output, but on account of the lower prices ruling the valuations show a reduction. The satisfactory prices ruling for fat lambs and wethers, however, compensated for the drop in wool. With practically the same number of dairy cows (10,266) in the flush season, butterfat-production increased by 215,521 lb.

This district offers much scope for further land development, and, provided finances are available, there is ample work for all the Native unemployed for many years to come.

The following are brief particulars of the schemes in progress in this district for the development and settlement of Native lands :—

Horohoro : General.

The Horohoro scheme, located along the main Atiamuri Road from Rotorua, was initiated in the summer of 1930, when development work on the pumice areas was first undertaken. The greater part of the block, which comprises some 10,896 acres, is now being successfully farmed, and prospects for the future are distinctly encouraging.

This land generally is flat to rolling and of pumice formation with a generous covering of light loam. There is a heavy, though evenly distributed, rainfall in the district from November till April which gives a prolific pasture growth. Climatic conditions in the winter and early spring are severe. Frosts are regularly experienced, with consequent reactions on the growth of pastures, but the settlers generally have made provision for these lean months by conserving supplies of hay and ensilage and by growing root crops such as swedes, mangels, carrots, and chou moelliers.

The people in this district are a very fine type of Maori settler—healthy, intelligent, and in the main ambitious in their farming operations—and when thoroughly settled down should measure up to the average pakeha dairy-farmer. They are a progressive people, as is evidenced by the fact that during the year under review they have conducted successfully their fourth annual Agricultural and Pastoral Show, have held a ploughing competition with very creditable results, have formed an active branch of the Young Farmers' Club, and have recently established a Pig Club, all of which is evidence of the interest these people are taking in their farming venture.